

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 24B

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Ordinary 24 - Year B
15th September 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

28 STF – Jesus calls us here to meet him

Opening Prayers (Need an inflatable globe)

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

362 STF – Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity OR

499 STF – Great God, your love has called us here

Readings: Proverbs 1:20-33; Psalm 19; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38

Hymn:

647 STF – God grant us words to speak when words are all we bear OR

563 STF – O Jesus, I have promised

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

462 STF – Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world OR

338 STF – There is a Redeemer

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

664 STF – Lord, you call us to your service OR

293 STF – All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on www.theworshipcloud.com.

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Call to worship

In the name of all that is right, all that is holy, all that is loving, all that is just,
We come to worship you, God of justice.
In seeking to follow in your way, and learn of your call on our lives afresh,
We gather in your presence.
Come amongst us, by your Spirit we pray,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR
28 STF – Jesus calls us here to meet him

Opening Prayers

(Need an inflatable globe)

Our concerns may be big but by leaning into the discomfort, centred on God, they may not stay as insurmountable problems.

Prayer is a serious business – but that does not mean it isn't allowed to be fun!

Pass the world: Throw an inflatable globe around the group, each choosing a country to find, call out and pray for.

It is light-hearted, with the potential for a moment of true solemnity when you choose to focus on a war-torn or disaster-affected country. Lean into that if appropriate and allow people the space to notice and feel the discomfort.

What do you notice about yourself when thinking about other countries? What comes up for you?

Let us pray.

Living God, you called us here, but we recognise we are a part of a big, wide world. A world where much is happening, where there are many situations, people and cultures we do not understand.

Help us to learn and understand our place, and our responsibility.

Help each of us to know your forgiveness, to know your love, and to hear your vocational call on our lives.

Bless this time of worship, that we might feel like we are part of a big, wide world,
In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by All We Can - allwecan.org.uk/practices

All Age Talk

Let us learn a bit more about what it means to be a Justice Seeking Church!

The Justice Seeking Church report is a series of resources from the Methodist Church, written and coordinated by Rachel Lampard, and adopted by the Methodist Conference last year. Importantly, this work doesn't replace the church's ongoing commitment to justice and peace, born out of Jesus' earthly ministry and emphasised throughout Methodist history, right up to today. Rather, this piece of work hopes to help focus and gather our justice-seeking efforts together. To provide spaces where we can share together and achieve more. To help us ask and answer the question: what is mine to do.

This is the second in a series of five worship resources produced by The Vine, exploring each of the five priorities identified by the Justice-Seeking Church work, today's theme is Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world. Even if you are not leading worship or using The Vine in any other capacity this month, I do recommend looking up the other four in the series, or exploring the justice-seeking church pages of the Methodist Church website so you become familiar with the other priorities.

All humans are made in the image of God and are worthy of equal value and dignity, and yet the United Nations estimates the number of people forcibly displaced is now 89.3 million, with over 27.1 million refugees. There is war, which drives people away from their homes. There are people who are starving and unable to make ends meet, who flee to seek a better life, and then there is the impact of the climate crisis which is making whole areas of the planet impossible to live on. This issue is not going away, and the church must be part of how we rethink the world to make it a safer, fairer, more welcoming place.

The Methodist Church's own international development charity, All We Can, traces its roots back to the 1930s with the Methodist Refugee Fund responding to the crisis facing refugees in Europe. Over the past 90 years Methodist people have supported All We Can in working alongside communities around the world experiencing war, disaster and poverty, but what can we do today?

A starting point might be...

Get in touch with All We Can to find out about existing or previous 'Refugee Week' resources, which could be used any time in your church to help highlight the issues. Consider making a donation or signing up as a regular giver or All We Can Champion.

Talk with your local authority, Refugees Welcome group or local refugee organised group to find out how refugees and asylum seekers are housed in your area. Explore what they need and how you might help to affirm their well-being, agency and dignity. Consider what it means to become a Church of Sanctuary.

And, perhaps most importantly, seek to shift the narrative about refugees and asylum seekers, for example through supporting people seeking refuge in telling their stories and helping communities share stories about countries that send and receive refugees around the world.³

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

Hymn:

362 STF – Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity OR

499 STF – Great God, your love has called us here

Readings: Proverbs 1:20-33; Psalm 19; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38

Hymn:

647 STF – God grant us words to speak when words are all we bear OR

563 STF – O Jesus, I have promised

Reflections on the readings

How can you, churches, the body and followers of Christ reflect the glory of God in the way the heavens do, to the ends of the earth (Psalm 19:1-4)? One way is by reflecting the righteousness of the precepts of God (Psalm 19:8), and upholding “wisdom” in streets and public squares (Proverbs 1:20). The reading from James alludes to this. James 3 centres on wisdom. The Gospel reading from Mark 8, centred on the words of Jesus brings a note of reality. Take up the cross, do what you can to bear witness to justice and to build a more just world for all. Anything worthwhile has a cost, reflected in the focus on the cross. Bearing the cross declares the message of the church loud and clear.

The message of the cross is that nothing worth doing is without personal cost. Jesus was tortured and persecuted and rejected. Jesus died denied, betrayed and abandoned even by his closest friends. He reflects not only humility, but takes on humiliation.

Ministry is costly and you will have your opponents. We can all speak about this from our own experience.

It is Gospel wisdom that we have to bear the cross. It is the pathway to resurrection and hope. With the cross at the centre of our existence, we are called to model leadership that handles power with redemptive love, with a capacity to share and give up power, always seeking to empower others.

In our world of many faiths and symbols, the cross is a distinctive Christian symbol and recognisable as such.

There are numerous interpretations of the cross, for example (Borg, Marcus. The Heart of Christianity):

- As a symbol of the defeat of the powers
- As a symbol of atonement
- As a political statement
- As a revelation of the way of Jesus

For me the cross is the Christian symbol of the depth of God’s love and the life God gives.

The Cross is the Christian symbol of humility, the humility of God.

The scene of the Cross and the crucifixion is often portrayed as a place and sign of loss, grief and being abandoned by God. This shapes so much of human approach to loss, grief and change. It is epitomised in Jesus’ cry of dereliction. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” It is a real cry reflecting the depths of human loneliness and grief. That is the feeling of raw loneliness and grief.

Yet the Bible insists also that creation emerges out of darkness, and resurrection is placed in the darkness of the tomb.

So if death is the final entrance into darkness, is there not an insistence in the Bible that this darkness is not the end of the story, but the beginning of a new chapter? Entering the darkness of death is the entrance into new life, because darkness is where life grows.

Redemptive gift in the suffering of the “stranger”

I am currently working to develop the idea of Church of Sanctuary, building cultures of welcome, protective hospitality and safety for vulnerable people, especially those fleeing danger to their lives. I feel compelled to stand with hurting people sharing the cross with them.

All human beings desire dignity, respect and flourishing.

Most refugees and people seeking sanctuary come from situations of pain and suffering and danger. The experience of the rejection, suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ gives meaning to their experience of rejection and hurt.

In the cost of Christ's passion and pain is also the gift of healing and hope. Here suffering is not willed by God, but is encompassed in God's love. In the face of sorrow and hurt it is appropriate to ask “why”, and to want to find meaning and wholeness in it. The Bible reflects the stories and experiences of a travelling people, undertaking difficult and dangerous journeys. Their hopes lie in a bruised Messiah.

In the New Testament Jesus is seen to embody the suffering servant. From his childhood to his crucifixion, Jesus Christ was familiar with the experience of vulnerability, rejection, persecution and suffering. In many ways he was a stranger in his own community. His own disciples did not always understand or recognise him. He was arrested though he had committed no crime. We read in Mark 14: 57, there were those who “stood up and gave false testimony against him”.

He was held captive. He was tortured. He was crucified outside the city gates, the ultimate acknowledgement that human community is defined by who is “in” and who is an “outsider”.

Jesus was betrayed, denied and abandoned by his best friends. This hurt him the most. He was nailed and crucified.

The earliest disciples and followers of Christ saw him as the “suffering servant” who bore the weight and agony of human sin as he hung on a cross.

The insight and truth proclaimed in this biblical testimony is that salvation and liberation come through suffering that is taken on and redeemed (Luke 24:26).

The crucifixion of Christ declares that God is with people in the human agonies and tragedies, and gives them hope in their most awful experiences. The crucifixion of Christ declares the depth of God's presence and love, a reminder that there is nothing worthwhile without cost. The resurrection declares that there is never a dead end, and insists on maintaining hope. There is the reality of hurt, and there is always the persistence of hope.

The Gospel does not go from crucifixion to crucifixion. It begins with the Good News that God is with us (incarnation); always desiring healing, hospitality and the fulness of life (ministry of Christ); sharing our deepest hurts (crucifixion); and always holding out the possibilities of hope (resurrection).

We bear witness to this truth when we see, acknowledge, feel, take on, challenge, seek to eradicate and redeem suffering and injustice.

We cannot live with the Gospel if we allow people to go from torture to torture, homelessness to homelessness, hunger to hunger, persecution to imprisonment, crucifixion to crucifixion.

We are called to practice the gospel by listening to, paying attention to, entering and identifying with the stories of pain and suffering, that refugees, and those seeking sanctuary, bear and tell. This is part of what it means to carry and bear witness to the cross.

In working with those who are hurting through the violence of war, famine, poverty and persecution, we together bear the weight of sin; we together struggle for justice, and seek the freedom of all.

Refugees and those seeking sanctuary among us are ambassadors, the messengers and witnesses of God.

Challenge the framing and stereotyping of refugees and those seeking sanctuary as a cost, and a burden, people who jump queues to benefits. Honour them for the gifts they are and bring, and advocate this change. It is the refugees that so often carry a cross, pay a very high cost, often losing all they have. Many lose their lives in their search for a better life.

It is worth remembering that Jesus carried his own cross. Along the way, Simon of Cyrene was “compelled...to carry his cross” (Mark 15:21). He just did it. No fuss, no noise, no seeking of attention. A quiet witness. Reflecting the glory of God, without words. Just as the heavens and the firmament (Psalm 19). We are likewise compelled in our faith journey to pick up the cross, without seeking attention.

And a question for you to reflect on this week – you may even wish to write it down, or put a note in your phone to remind you to spend some time with this: In what ways are you compelled to carry the cross with those bearing hurt?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

462 STF – Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world OR

338 STF – There is a Redeemer

Prayers of intercession

Let us Pray.

Let us pray to God for the Church of Christ throughout the world that all will be given strength to bear witness to the cross of Christ in our mission and ministry, worship and prayer.

God hears our prayers

Thanks be to God.

Let us pray to God for all nations and all leaders that all will work to make life better for those who are most vulnerable

God hears our prayers

Thanks be to God.

Let us prayer for an end to all hostility, war and violence, giving thanks for all who uphold and bear witness to the things that make for peace.

God hears our prayers

Thanks be to God.

Let us pray to God for all who need help and support today, especially those we carry in our hearts for they are in our prayers that the grace of God will be on them and bless them.

⁴ Reflection written by Inderjit Bhogal

God hears our prayers
Thanks be to God.

Let us pray to God for all who are far from home, prisoners, immigrants, exiles, refugees
and all who seek justice

God hears our prayers
Thanks be to God.

Let us pray to God for ourselves, that we may be given the grace to follow Christ and share
his cross

God hears our prayers
Thanks be to God.

Let us with thanks hold before God those who have died and whose memory is precious to
us, remembering especially those who gave their lives for justice and peace, and those who
have died in their pursuit of safety. Grant them peace. Give strength to all who are
bereaved. Bless all who mourn the loss of their homes and livelihood. And grant to us
wisdom and encouragement from the vision, witness and example of all the saints who
have gone before us.

God hears our prayers
Thanks be to God.

We offer our prayers in the Name of Christ,
Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Creator God,
Creative Christ,
Energising Spirit,
Receive these gifts, that they might be for us an encouragement to offer welcome, that they
might be used to build and spread sanctuary,
In Jesus' name,
Amen.⁶

Hymn:

664 STF – Lord, you call us to your service OR
293 STF – All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord

Blessing

You shall go out with peace,
And be sent forth with joy,
And the mountains and the hills will break forth before you.
There will be shouts of peace, and hope, and welcome, and prosperity for all,
And the trees of the fields shall clap, shall clap their hands.
Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Inderjit Bhogal

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker